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S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 05 DOHA 000866

SIPDIS

FOR LTG JOHN ALLEN FROM AMBASSADOR LEBARON

E.O. 12958: DECL: 12/14/2018

TAGS: [PREL](#) [MOPS](#) [PGOV](#) [QA](#)

SUBJECT: SCENESETTER FOR LTGEN ALLEN'S DECEMBER 17 VISIT TO QATAR

Classified By: Amb. Joseph LeBaron, reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (C) General Allen, Embassy Doha welcomes your visit to Qatar. I look forward to meeting with you and joining you for dinner with the Chief of Staff of the Qatar Armed Forces, Major General Hamad bin Ali Al-Attiyeh. Because your visit is so short and December 18 is Qatar's National Day, there will unfortunately be no opportunities for engagement with Qatari leadership during this trip.

¶2. (C) As this is your first visit, relationship-building is clearly a major objective. GEN Petraeus visited Qatar twice as MNF-I Commander, but has yet to visit since assuming command of CENTCOM. The Qataris are very much looking forward to that, and to beginning, with your visit, engagement with the new CENTCOM leadership team. On a future visit, we hope you will be able to meet with Qatar's Heir Apparent, Sheikh Tamim Al Thani, who has overall responsibility for Qatar's military and security services.

¶3. (C) Here we provide the Country Team's views on how your visit can best advance the U.S. Government's strategic objectives in Qatar. We also discuss the key strategic trends in the bilateral relationship over the coming three years. We start, however, with a brief review of the bilateral relationship.

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THE U.S.-QATAR RELATIONSHIP  
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¶4. (C) The breadth and depth of Qatar's relationship with the U.S. is impressive, especially for a small country the size of Connecticut, with only 1.7 million inhabitants, of whom only about 225,000 are actually Qatari citizens.

-- The U.S.-Qatar military relationship is, of course, extremely important. Qatar provides the U.S. military exceptional access to two major Qatari military installations, Al Udaid Air Base and Camp As-Sayliah - perhaps CENTCOM's most important operating installations outside of Iraq. Qatar charges us no rent, and in fact is funding over \$700 million in construction projects for the exclusive use of the U.S. military.

-- Until recently, the U.S. had never made a major defense sale to Qatar. In July, however, Qatar signed contracts with Boeing for two C-17s with an option for two more, and with Lockheed-Martin for four C-130Js with an option for two more. The C-17 and C-130 sales are a signal the Qataris are beginning to invest in their own defensive capabilities - with a preference for U.S.-origin equipment. Qatar Armed Forces have expressed interest in many other U.S. defense

systems, most notably an integrated air defense.

-- The broader economic relationship between Qatar and the United States is vital. U.S. energy companies have invested tens of billions of dollars in the oil and gas industry here. Qatar, which holds the third largest natural gas reserves in the world after Iran and Russia, is expected to become in 2009 one of the most important suppliers of imported liquefied natural gas to the U.S. market.

-- Because it is so small and its energy resources so large, Qatar now has an annual per capita income of over \$60,000. Even with the current global financial crisis, Qatar's national revenues will continue growing, and Qatar should soon have the highest per capita income in the world.

-- Vast wealth has bolstered the country's political ambitions, leading to Qatari foreign policy initiatives that have too often been at odds with U.S. objectives. Examples include Qatar's relations with Hamas, Hezbollah, Syria, and Sudan.

-- Qatar's location, wide-ranging foreign relations, fast-growing economy, and expanding transportation links have made counterterrorism cooperation, including counterterrorist financing, a key aspect of our relationship. Qatar's wealth, in particular, means its citizens are potential sources of money for violent extremists and cooperative efforts to target and prevent these financial flows are central to our bilateral agenda.

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-- Qatar has committed itself like few other Arab states to modernizing its educational system, and has turned decisively to the United States for help. Qatar has imported branch campuses of six U.S. universities, including Texas A&M, Carnegie-Mellon, Weill-Cornell Medical School, Georgetown, Virginia Commonwealth, and Northwestern. It is instituting a U.S. model of charter schools at the elementary and secondary levels.

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THE MILITARY RELATIONSHIP: KEY TRENDS THROUGH 2011  
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15. (S) Following are the key trends over the next three years that we believe will have the greatest impact on our military relationship:

-- Qatar will continue to modernize its military through the purchase of U.S. weapons systems, though competition will continue from the French, British, and others. Despite Qatar's wealth, defense purchases will be made in the context of a frugal military budget. Economic development will remain Qatar's top spending priority.

-- Qatar will continue to face a formidable challenge staffing its military with Qataris because there are so few Qataris and because more attractive salaries exist in the private sector. The continued dependence on foreign nationals, particularly in the enlisted ranks, will continue to present concerns about transfers of sensitive U.S. technology.

-- The Qatari leadership will seek to increase the prestige of its military within the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) and the international arena, but has no clearly defined strategy for doing so. Likewise, Qatar is attracted to the latest military systems, even while its military modernization is not guided by a national security strategy, at least not one we're aware of.

-- Qatar's defense purchases are currently misaligned with the maritime threats to its critical economic infrastructure and the ballistic missile threats it faces from Iran. But

Qatar's recent C-130 and C-17 aircraft purchases do align with its desire to carve out a niche in the region and internationally for humanitarian relief and disaster response. This trend will continue.

-- In the short term, irritating customs and immigration issues stemming from Qatar's need to demonstrate sovereignty over Al Udaid Air Base will continue to plague the mil-mil relationship. This is compounded by USG personnel who fail to follow published rules and procedures. Recent infractions noted by the Qataris include personnel from the CENTCOM Assessment Team and INTERNAL LOOK.

-- We expect that the biggest factor in our engagement in the near term will be Qatar's sensitivity to the large, enduring U.S. military presence. While Qatar's leadership and population regard our presence as a permanent and necessary deterrent to the aggression of surrounding states, principally Iran and Saudi Arabia, it does expose it to regional criticism and, potentially, to terrorist attack.

-- We expect, therefore, that Qatar will continue to pursue a policy of strengthening and deepening the military relationship through increased combined planning, training, exercises, and operations - along the lines of the relationship that exists between the U.S. Forces in Korea and the Republic of Korea Armed Forces.

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HOW YOUR VISIT CAN HELP THESE STRATEGIC ENGAGEMENT GOALS  
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¶6. (C) Defense sales and other elements of security assistance and cooperation are aimed at strengthening our long-term military and economic relationship. The Government of Qatar's efforts to modernize the Qatar Armed Forces, to include airlift, critical economic infrastructure protection, and missile defense, are in line with USG objectives to strengthen regional partners and enhance regional security.

¶7. (C) Embassy Doha is working to synchronize activities

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across the interagency in an effort to support execution of USG policy, plans and programs. As we work to deepen and expand our strategic, operational and tactical cooperation with the Government of Qatar, we see your visit as a tool to further these shared, strategic, goals. Here's how your visit can help:

¶8. (S) The trends identified above suggest a strong imperative for Qatar to develop an overarching national security strategy, guiding its military development, defense purchases, cooperation with the U.S. and other allies. The U.S. has a strong interest in working with Qatar on that, ensuring to the extent possible, that their national security strategy is consistent with, and supportive of, our own. Given your position as Deputy Commander, U.S. Central Command, you are well placed to urge the Qatari leadership in this direction and help them understand the importance of developing a broad and detailed strategy into which their current defense acquisitions fit.

¶9. (C) PRAISE FOR DEFENSE SALES: You should compliment Qatar for signing contracts with Boeing in July for two C-17s (with an option for two more) and with Lockheed-Martin for four C-130Js (also with an option for two more) and encourage the Qataris to continue down this path. Boeing anticipates initial delivery of the first C-17 in late 2009.

-- The C-17 and C-130 sales (both hybrid DCS-FMS cases) are a signal the Qataris are beginning to invest in their own defense capabilities, especially in the area of humanitarian relief. Qatar is also looking at U.S. helicopters and Hellfire II missiles as part of its National Security Shield effort, and possibly F-16 or F-18 fighter aircraft as well as

an integrated air defense system. Currently, U.S. and Qatari officers are meeting in Tampa to discuss how best to proceed toward this integrated missile defense. This sale has the potential, as it could include Patriot-PAC 3 and sentinel radar, to be worth upwards of USD 20 billion.

¶10. (S) GETTING THE PATRIOT MISSILES BACK ON THE RAILS: This issue has now festered for more than a year and the motivations behind Qatar's inaction remain largely mysterious.

-- Patriots were deployed to Qatar in fall 2006 to support the 15th Asian Games. Protection was primarily for U.S. Forces at Al Udaid and Camp As-Sayliah, but also covered a large portion of Doha and some (though not all) critical infrastructure. On October 15, 2007, a routine test sequence resulted in the accidental launch of a Patriot Missile from a battery at Camp As-Sayliah. The missile landed on the Qatari COS' farm a few kilometers from Camp As-Sayliah, with no injuries or property damage. U.S.-Qatari cooperation on the investigation was good and the Qataris appreciated that ADM Fallon responded quickly to their request to stand both batteries down and physically remove missiles from the launchers.

-- The Qataris originally signaled that they would agree to put the Patriot batteries back up, but first asked for the full report on the incident, temporary rules of engagement, and an analysis of the Patriots' coverage area to ensure that the city of Doha is covered and not just the military bases.

-- Completion of the final report took longer than expected, but has since been briefed to senior Qatari military officers. In early September, however, we were informed that the Government of Qatar seeks to establish strategic-level rules of engagement (as opposed to tactical procedures) on exactly when, where, and how the Patriots may be used.

-- LTG Dempsey and LtGen North engaged MG Al-Attayah personally for redeployment of Patriots, but to no avail. CENTCOM and AFCENT are aware of the rules-of-engagement request and are concerned about the ramifications and precedence set by entering into such discussions. We believe that the delay in the return to operational status likely boils down to Qatari sovereignty concerns and, perhaps, a GOQ desire for some form of role in granting permission or approval prior to firing missiles. The Qataris have also asked for coverage of Ras Laffan, the natural gas liquefaction and shipping facilities in the northeast of the peninsula. That is simply impossible, however, with the current Patriot assets in country.

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-- Most recently, OMC Qatar was informed that Qatar wished to get the Patriots back on the rails by December 24, most likely as a response to Mumbai and perceptions that U.S. forces in Qatar could be targeted during the U.S. holiday season. Lead for negotiations changed to BG Abdulla Juma'an, the Qatar Armed Forces' Chief of International Relations. BG Abdulla informed OMC Qatar that he was ready to negotiate with U.S. air defense personnel; OMC Qatar is working to coordinate a meeting.

-- Meanwhile, Qatar is aggressively pursuing FMS information on an integrated air defense system which includes, among other systems, Patriot-PAC 3. Additionally, Qatar is aware that its neighbors Bahrain and UAE are in the process of receiving one each Patriot battery as part of an enhanced air defense posture for U.S. Forces in the region.

-- Continuation of the current situation is clearly a lose-lose for both U.S. and Qatar in terms of security. You should encourage MG Al-Attayah to authorize us to put the Patriots back on rails regardless of the outcome of the operational guide or rules of engagement discussions. Although the final decision likely lies with Sheikh Tamim, MG

Al-Attiyeh's recommendation will be decisive.

¶11. (C) ENCOURAGE RESOLUTION OF ONGOING CUSTOMS ISSUES: You should note U.S. understanding that military facilities provided for U.S. use in Qatar are sovereign Qatari territory, and in this context express our desire to resolve customs problems that plague our overall bilateral strategic defense relationship.

-- There have been numerous incidents in which Coalition personnel violated established Qatar customs procedures on entry or exit from the country, leading to Qatari accusations that U.S. personnel are not respecting Qatari sovereignty. These led Qatar, in March 2007, to implement troublesome new customs procedures for personnel, equipment, and cargo entering or transiting the country.

-- These tactical-level irritants will be exacerbated as we shift operational focus to efforts in Afghanistan, and will lead to delays in intra-theater cargo movement thus degrading our operational capabilities. Continued degradation of this type will continue to erode our once strong strategic mil-to-mil relationship.

-- CENTCOM J5, AFCENT, ASG-Qatar and OMC Qatar personnel held discussions with the Qatari Armed Forces in June and November 2007 and March 2008, which led to agreement on temporary procedures. Only constant, daily OMC Qatar and AFCENT interaction with the Qatar Armed Forces GHQ and Customs and Ports Authority officials prevent detrimental effects to U.S. operations.

-- We regard the temporary procedures as a stepping stone for permanent procedures that respect U.S. and Qatar sovereignty, support U.S. operations and are in line with the Defense Cooperation Agreement. Meetings are now scheduled for January 12-14 in Tampa at which, we hope, permanent procedures can be agreed. But in the meantime, some goodwill from the Qatari side would go a long way toward easing U.S. military operations in Qatar.

¶12. CHOD CONFERENCE: Redlines on both sides caused a delay in the previously scheduled Chiefs of Defense conference to be co-hosted by CENTCOM and Qatar. No new date has been agreed upon.

-- CENTCOM wishes Qatar to invite (in addition to GCC, Iraq and Lebanon) Jordan and Egypt. Qatar insists that CENTCOM invite those two countries, owing to Qatari sensitivities that earlier invitations went unanswered. There is potential for re-engagement at least on the part of Jordan as there has been a thaw in the relationship.

-- CENTCOM wishes invitations to be dual-signed, Qatar wants to send the invitations independently and suggests that General Petraeus send a letter of endorsement.

-- There is also disagreement over who will pay for what.

-- At a minimum, we recommend you ask the COS if he still wishes to co-host the conference, if he has given any

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additional thought to dates, and if he has thoughts on the Jordan-Egypt issue. If CENTCOM still wishes Qatar to host the conference, we recommend you discuss with the Chief of Staff if there is leeway on one or more of these issues.  
LeBaron